

**A GUIDE TO CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT FOR
TASMANIAN HOMELESSNESS SERVICES**

**Feedback:
How to make it part of service delivery**



Consumer feedback can be used to **inform** the way we work with **individuals** and **families** and the way we design, deliver and **evaluate our services.**

INTRODUCTION

People’s experience of seeking, accessing and using housing and homelessness services has a significant impact on the outcomes they achieve. Evidence demonstrates that consumer input can improve services and the wellbeing of those involved.

Consumers have a unique perspective and provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the services we deliver. Listening to consumers helps us to understand what is important to them, what they want to achieve and how we can work together to support them to achieve their goals. Engaging consumers in making decisions is therefore an essential part of a strengths-based, rights focused approach to service delivery.

While collecting and using consumer feedback is important, it is only one element of consumer engagement. Organisations need to think more broadly, and consider a variety of ways to engage consumers.



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MODELS OF FEEDBACK

Organisations are required to maintain systems and processes that enable consumers to provide feedback about their experience of services and opportunities for improvement. Creating a culture of feedback, review and service improvement can be achieved in a range of ways. The following table on the has been produced to explain what, when and how to use each feedback mode.

| MODE OF FEEDBACK | WHEN TO USE | HOW | SUGGESTED DIALOGUE |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Consumer surveys and interviews | Annually as part of a formal quality improvement process. Benchmark year-to-year data | Survey tools, such as Survey Monkey. Questionnaires. Face to face interviews | So we can serve you better in the future, I need to know how I'm doing now |
| Focus groups and discussion groups | When you require feedback about a specific service or program. During consultation on service design or delivery modes. For strategic input | Develop specific questions/ topics for discussion. Ascertain key points/themes and use data | We are having these focus groups to assist us to provide you with better services/ programs and really value your feedback |
| Follow up appointments/visit | Utilise when intervention has been longer term, and when a consumer has asked for a meeting to give you feedback | Provide 'tell us what you think' feedback form Informal dialogue | What have we done really well? What can we do better? Anything else? |
| Informal feedback | At time of intervention | Verbal or Text message | How did we do in meeting your needs? See template for suggested text |
| Compliment and complaint systems | Ongoing. As a component of your quality improvement process | Compliment and complaint forms | We welcome your feedback, if you have anything you would like us to know please complete this form |
| Resident feedback committee | Ongoing. As a component of your quality improvement process. When you require feedback about a specific service or program. During consultation on service design or delivery modes. For strategic input | Develop specific questions/ topics for discussion. Ascertain key points/themes and use data | Thank you for assisting us to provide you with better services & programs, we really value your feedback |
| Social Media | At any time | Messaging requesting feedback. Announcing new processes, programs or services as a result of feedback | Varied |
| Text Messages | Crisis or Brief Intervention | See template attached | See template attached |
| Phone follow up | This may be as part of an annual review/survey, or when a consumer has asked you to follow up | Develop specific questions/ topics for discussion. Use the 'tell us what you think' feedback form | Set questions so we can serve you better in the future, we need to know how we've done |
| Community forums and workshops | When you require feedback about a specific service or program. During consultation on service design or delivery modes. For strategic input | Develop specific questions/ topics for discussion | Thank you for assisting us to provide you with better services & programs, we really value your feedback |

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BUILDING RAPPORT & ENGAGING CONSUMERS

Homelessness is not a choice. People can become homeless for a number of reasons, including long-term financial disadvantage, a history of trauma, family violence, a financial crisis or mental ill health. Building rapport and establishing trust is very important when engaging consumers. It can take time to build up meaningful rapport, which is difficult when you work within a crisis service. Do not rush the discussion, instead deal with immediate needs, engage people in setting their goals and their case plans, as well as asking for feedback can assist.

Make the language on any information, brochures and feedback forms easy to understand. Ensuring anonymity when someone provides feedback is of vital importance, so consumers know they can be honest without the perceived threat of reprisal.

Where possible utilising a peer facilitation process, where consumers can support other consumers who are accessing your services, can establish a more inclusive and collaborative approach.

Providing payment for consumer engagement is a demonstration of an organisation's commitment to valuing engagement of those with specialty knowledge and could be considered standard practice for all engagement, including focus groups.

TIMING - 'WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO COLLECT FEEDBACK FROM CONSUMERS'?

The best time to gather feedback is at the time of providing the service. Feedback is vital to your organisation, and it is important to get that information as soon as the consumer has engaged with your service. This also becomes a tool to establish trust with the person/s you are talking to and aids in quality connection. The main reasons you need to be proactive about getting consumer feedback are:

- You need to be collecting feedback as soon as possible, as the consumer may be in crisis and could confuse their visit with your organisation and another service. Being able to recall the assistance clearly, and who provided it allows you to improve. If you wait a few weeks before sending out a survey, the consumer may have very well forgotten about what you did!
- While knowing about a consumer's experience is important, asking specific questions will assist with service improvement.
- Consumers often don't leave feedback because it takes too much time out of their day. Instead, if you approach the issue by simply asking consumers their current thoughts, through a few questions or small pop-up surveys, you can quickly address issues. Text messaging the day of the service can also elicit quick and timely feedback.
- When you're collecting feedback, you can't be selective about who you collect it from and when. To get feedback, you must attempt to get feedback from every consumer you work with. Your surveys should all be consistent. Not only will this make processing the data much easier, you will have a much clearer view of where you are doing well, and where it could be improved.

Collecting feedback is important in a culture of continuous improvement. The worst feedback you can get is not negative feedback, but no feedback at all, and people will typically want to share their experiences with you, even when accessing crisis intervention.

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WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE FEEDBACK?

Consumer feedback is only valuable when it is used to inform ongoing planning and quality improvement activities. This will include revising the way services are delivered and evaluated or creating new services that respond to consumers' needs.

All feedback is useful, even negative feedback. If you receive critical feedback about your service or a particular staff member, see it as an opportunity to improve the way you work and what services you provide. For consumer engagement to be meaningful, honest opinions about how we were treated, how we were assisted and if our needs and goals were met need to be 'heard' and acted upon. People need to be able to give feedback, positive or negative, without the fear of loss of service.

Ensuring there is a feedback loop, where those that give feedback, through any of the suggested models, are informed of the actions undertaken and thanked for their input. Explaining to consumers how the information is used is an important step in the feedback loop. Consider having a feedback board in a waiting area, where potential service users can see feedback listed and dated, with any actions taken by the organisation written next to it. Update this regularly.



This resource was developed with input from participants of the Shelter Tasmania 'Tasmanian Housing and Homelessness Workforce Symposium' held on the 23rd June 2016, which was overseen by the Workforce Development Reference Group and their Resources Advisory Group.

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TOOLKIT:

The following table has been produced to explain why the key engagement strategies are used and the potential benefit for consumers and workers.

| TELL US WHAT YOU THINK | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Please take a few minutes to let us know about your experience | | | | | |
| Service: (e.g. Karinya Young Women's Service) | | | | | |
| Name: (Optional) | | | Date: | | |
| Staff were very professional | Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Neither Agree or Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree <input type="radio"/> |
| They listened to my needs | Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Neither Agree or Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree <input type="radio"/> |
| They worked <i>with</i> me | Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Neither Agree or Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree <input type="radio"/> |
| Provided assistance or referred me to someone who could | Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Neither Agree or Disagree <input type="radio"/> | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree <input type="radio"/> |
| What did they do really well? | | | | | |
| What could they do better? | | | | | |
| Any other comments? | | | | | |
| Service Actions: What will we do with this feedback? (Please dot point) | | | | | |

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TOOLKIT: PICTORIAL FEEDBACK FORM TEMPLATE

HOW DID WE DO?

RATE OUR SERVICE:

| | | |
|---|---------|--------------------------|
|  | AWESOME | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | AVERAGE | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | POOR | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments (optional):

.....

.....

Do you have anything else to tell us? :

.....

.....

Name (optional):

Phone (optional):

TOOLKIT: TEXT MESSAGE FEEDBACK TEMPLATE

We want ur feedback on our service:  or  or 

Or txt us your thoughts

Thx (name of agency).

*You can use any emojis (these three are just examples).
Whatever you choose, please be consistent - send the same three or four to everyone you ask for text feedback from).*

